

Rail Conference for the East Friday 1st February 2019

I attended this Conference held in Ipswich where presentations were made by Greater Anglia, Network Rail, and the Department of Transport. It was all facilitated by Priti Patel, MP, Chair of the Great Eastern Main Line Taskforce.

Present were a great number of stakeholders, including Businesses, MPs, Rail User Federations and more.

Jamie Burles, Managing Director of Greater Anglia.

He spoke of the new trains that are coming, Stadler trains currently being tested on the Norwich to London line.

An investment of £57 million has been made in Crown Point, Norwich which is being expanded, as is the Bombardier depot at Ilford. This is due to the plans for the Depot at Brantham having to be changed, and an announcement will be made soon. (How many times have we heard that?)

May 2019 is the target for Norwich – London in 90. First new trains will be introduced this summer with all in service by 2020.

Intercity trains will always be 12 carriages, 20% more seating, Air-conditioning, Free Wifi, Plugs and USB ports. Regional services will be a Minimum of 3 or 4 carriages, not 1, 2 or 3!

There will be a phased in timetable over the following 2 years.

There will be infrastructure upgrades, mainly with Level Crossings, and by May 2020, it is hoped that we may see journey time reductions.

£25 million pounds is being invested in upgrading car parks, with Automatic Number Plate Readers (ANPR), CCTV, resurfacing and provision of more spaces.

Smart Cards have seen an uptake by 70% of Season Ticket holders. I asked him if these would eventually be similar to an Oyster card in that it could be preloaded with credit/pay as you go, and he stated that eventually a number of products would be able to be loaded onto them. Also I asked about the card readers, and he confirmed that passengers would have to tap in and out (as with an Oyster card).

Delay Repay 15 – is nearly at agreement – and there should be an announcement this month (February 2019).

Ticket Machines are being rolled out to almost all regional stations, with additional Land Sheriffs, to provide assistance and security etc.

Meliha Duymaz, Route Managing Director, Anglia Network Rail

CP6 is the Control Period 2019-2024. In 2017/2018 there were 1.7 billion railway journeys a year, and increase of 100% over 20 years. Within the Anglian region there has been a 20% increase, with an anticipated 20% increase in the next 10 years.

Network Rail Campaign – Every Second Counts – in relation to performance.

Speed Restrictions are put in place to protect both the network and users. External affects on reliability etc, there have already been 4 or 5 fatalities in 2019 on the Anglian network.

£10 million is being invested to improve performance.

CP6 Budget is £2.5 Billion pounds which is from April 2019 to 2024. £1 billion investment in maintenance/operate the network. £1.2 billion investment to renew infrastructure and upgrading. This is 21% more in funding than CP5.

£400 million on track across the region. GEML track improvement between Colchester & Ipswich.

£250 million on signals/level crossings. Clacton will be getting resignalling upgrades.

Plan to close over 100 level crossings across the region in CP6. Trying to get powers to do so. Essex Public Inquiry is still ongoing.

£250 million on structures, bridges, embankments etc.

& NR are going to replace the roof at Liverpool Street Station.

Overhead line equipment replacement is nearly completed.

James Bradley, Lead Strategic Planner, Network Rail

His presentation was Capacity focussed, with regard to future growth and impact. A quite detailed presentation that alluded to in the future how many more trains could run per hour/day on the mainline without causing too much impact!

Chris Starkie, Chief Executive, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

This presentation was from a Business view point and one of the comments he made was about being told in 2010 ‘never get new trains’ and ‘wouldn’t use a Lamborghini to visit the corner shop’. Thankfully attitudes have now changed considerably, and they nearly have enough financial commitment re Haughey Junction to approach the Department of Transport and seek match funding.

There were a number of other speakers however I felt that the above people’s presentations were of more value.